

# TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF ENGLAND,

in Parliament assembled.

*The Levellers petition*

*The humble Petition of Thousands well affected persons inhabiting the City of London, Westminster, the Borough of Southwark, Hamlets, and places adjacent.*

**T**hat although we are as earnestly desirous of a safe and well-grounded Peace, and that a final end were put to all the troubles and miseries of the Common-wealth, as any sort of men whatsoever: Yet considering upon what grounds we engaged on your Part in the late and present Wars, and how far (by our so doing) we apprehend our selves concerned, Give us leave (before you conclude us by the Treaty imand) to acquaint you first with the ground and reason which induced us to aid you against the King and his Adherents: Secondly, What our Apprehensions are of this Treaty. Thirdly, what we expected from you, and do still most earnestly desire.

Be pleased therefore to understand, that we had not engaged on your part, but that we judged this honorable House to be the supreme Authority of England, as chosen by, and representing the People; and intrusted with absolute power for redress of Grievances, and provision for Safety: and that the King was but at the most the chief publick Officer of this Kingdom, and accountable to this House (the Representative of the People from whom all just Authority is, or ought to be derived) for discharge of his Office: And if we had not bin confident hereof, we had not bin desperately mad to have taken up Armes, or to have bin aiding and assisting in maintaining *war against Him*; the Laws of the Land making it expressly a crime no lesse than Treason for any to raise War against the King.

But when we considered the manifold oppressions brought upon the Nation, by the King, his Lords and Bishops; and that this Honourable House declared their deep sense thereof; and that (for continuance of that power which had so oppressed us) it was evident the King intended to raise Forces, and to make War; and that if he did set up his Standard, it tended to the dissolution of the Government: upon this, knowing the safety of the People to be above Law, and that to judge thereof appertained to the supreme Authority, and not to the supreme Magistrate, and being satisfied in our Consciences, that the publick safety and freedom was in imminent danger, we concluded we had not onely a just cause to maintain; but the supreme Authority of the Nation, to justify, defend and indemnify us in time to come, in what we should perform by direction thereof; though the highest.

And as this our understanding was begotten in us by principles of right reason, so were we confirmed therein by your own proceedings, as by your condemning those Judges who in the case of Ship-money had declared the King to be Judge of Safety; and by your denying him to have a Negative voice in the making of Lawes; where you wholly exclude the King from having any share in the supreme Authority: Then by your calling the Bishop out of the House of Lords, who by tradition also, had bin accounted an essentiall part of the supreme Authority; and by your declaring to the Lords, That if they would not joyn with you in selling the *Militia*, (which they long refused) you would settle it without them, which you could not justly have done, had they had any real share in the supreme Authority.

These things we took for real Demonstrations, that you undoubtedly knew your selves to be the supreme Authority; ever weighing down in us all other your indulgent *Expressions concerning the King or Lords*; it being indeed impossible for us to believe, that it can consist either with the safety or freedom of the Nation, to be governed either by three or two Supremes, especially where experience hath proved them so apt to differ in their Judgments concerning freedom or safety, that the one hath bin known to punish what the other hath judged worthy of reward; when not only the freedom of the people is directly opposite to the Prerogatives of the King and Lords, but the open enemies of the one have bin declared friends by the other, as the Scots were by the House of Lords.

And when as most of the oppressions of the Common-wealth have in all times bin brought upon the people by the King and Lords, who nevertheless would be so equal in the supreme Authority, as that there could be no redress of Grievances, no provision for safety, but at their pleasure: For our parts, we profess our selves to be so far from judging this to be consistent with freedom or safety, that we know no greater cause wherefore we assisted you in the late Wars, but in hope to be delivered by you from so intolerable, so destructive a bondage, so soon as you should (through Gods blessing upon the Armes raised by you) be enabled.

But to our exceeding griefe, we have observed that no sooner God vouchsafeth you victory, and blesteth you with success, and thereby enableth you to put us and the whole Nation into an absolute condition of Freedom and Safety: but according as we have been accustomed, passing by the ruine of the Nation, and all the blood that hath been spilt by the King and his Party, ye betake your selves to a Treaty with him, thereby putting him that is but one single person, and a publick Officer of the Common-wealth, in competition with the whole Body of the People, whom ye represent; not considering that it is impossible for you to erect any Authority equall to your selves; and declared to all the world that you will not alter the ancient Government, from that of King, Lords, and Commons: not once mentioning (in case of difference) which of them is supreme, but leaving that point (which was the chiefest cause of all our publick disturbances, wars, and miseries) as uncertain as ever.

In so much as we who upon these grounds have laid out or selves every way to the uttermost of our abilities: and all others throughout the Land, Souldiers and others who have done the like in defence of your supreme Authority, and in opposition to the King, cannot but deem our selves in the most dangerous condition of all others, left without all plea of indemnity for what we have done; as already many have found by losse of their lives and liberties, either for things done or said against the King; the law of the land frequently taking place, and precedence against and before your Authority, which we esteemed supreme, and against which no law ought to be pleaded. Nor can we possibly conceive how any that have any waies assisted you can be exempt from the guilt of murderers and robbers, by the present law in force, if you persist to disclaim the supreme authority, though their own consciences do acquit them, as having opposed none but manifest Tyrants, Oppressors, and their adherents.

And whereas a Personall Treaty, or any Treaty with the King, hath been long time held forth as the onely means of a safe and well-grounded Peace; it is well known to have been cryed up principally by such as have been alwaies disaffected unto you, and though you have not contradicted it, yet it is believed that you much feare the issue thereof; as you have cause sufficient, except you see greater alteration in the King and his party, that is generally observed, there having never yet been any Treaty with him, but was accompanied with some underhand dealing; and whilst the present force upon him (though seeming liberty) will in time to come be certainly pleaded, against all that shall or can be agreed upon: Nay, what can you confide in if you consider how he hath been provoked; and what former Kings upon these provocations have done, after Oaths, Laws, Charters, Bonds, Excommunications, and all ties of Reconciliations, to the destruction of all those that had provoked and opposed them: ye, when your selves so soon as he had signed those Bills, in the beginning of this Parliament saw cause to tell him, *That ever in or about the time of passing those Bills, some designs or other was on foot, which if it had taken effect, would not only have rendered those Bills fruitlesse, but have reduced you to a worse condition of confusion, than that wherein the Parliament found you.* And if you consider, what new Wars, Rulings, Revolting invasions, and plottings have been since this lastery for a Personall Treaty, you will not blame us if we wonder at your hasty proceedings thereunto: especially considering the wonderfull Victories which God hath blessed the Armes withall.

We profess we cannot chuse but stand amazed to consider the inevitable danger we shall be in, though all things in the Propositions were agreed unto; the resolutions of the King and his party have been so perpetually violently and implacably prosecuted and manifested against us; and that with such scorn and indignation, that it must be more than such ordinary Bonds that must hold them. And it is no lesse a wonder to us that you can place your own security therein, or that you can ever imagine to see a free Parliament any more in England.

The truth is (and we see we must either now speake it, or for ever be silent,) We have long expected things of an other nature from you, and such as we are confident would have given satisfaction to all serious people of all Parties.

As,

1. That you would have made the supreme authority of the people, in this Honourable House, from all pre-  
sences of Negative Voices, either in the King or Lords.
2. That you would have made laws for election of representatives yearly and of course without writ or in-  
mmons.
3. That you would have set expresse times for their meeting Continuance and Dissolution: as not to exceed  
40. or 50. daies at the most, and to have fixed an expresse time for the ending of this present Parliament.
4. That you would have exempted matters of Religion and Gods worship, from the compulsive or restrictive  
power of any Authority upon earth, and reserved to the supreme authority an un-compulsive power only of  
appointing a way for the publick, whereby abundance of misery, persecution, and heart-burning would for e-  
ver be avoided.
5. That you would have disclaimed in your selves and all future Representatives, a power of Pressing and  
forcing any sort of men to serve in wars, there being nothing more opposite to freedom, nor more unreasona-  
ble in an authority impowered for raising monies in all occasions, for which, and a just cause, all men need  
not be doubted: the other way serving rather to maintain injustice and corrupt parties.
6. That you would have made both Kings, Queens, Princes, Dukes, Earls, Lords, and all Persons, alike liable to  
every Law of the Land, made or to be made; that so all persons even the Highest might fear and stand in awe,  
and neither violate the publick peace, nor private right of person or estate, (as hath been frequent) without be-  
ing liable to accompt as other men.
7. That you would have freed all Commoners from the Jurisdiction of the Lords in all cases; and so have taken  
care that all tryalls should be only by twelve sworn men, and no conviction but upon two or more sufficient  
known witnesses.
8. That you would have freed all men from being examined against themselves, and from being questioned or  
punished for doing of that against which no Law hath bin provided.
9. That you would have abbreviated the proceedings in Law, mitigated and made certain the charge thereof in  
all particulars.
10. That you would have freed all Trade and Merchandising from all Monopolizing and Engraving, by Com-  
panies or otherwise.
11. That you would have abolished Excise, and all kind of taxes, except subsidies, the old and onely just way  
of England.
12. That you would have laid open all late Inclosures of Fens, and other Commons, or have enclosed them  
onely or chiefly to the benefit of the poor.
13. That you would have considered the many thousands that are ruined by perpetuall imprisonment for debt  
and provided for their enlargement.
14. That you would have ordered some effectuall course to keep people from begging and beggary, in to  
fruitfull a Nation as through Gods blessing this is.
15. That you would have proportioned punishments more equal to offences; that so mens Lives and Estates  
might not be forfeited upon trivial and slight occasions.
16. That you would have removed the tedious burthen of Tythes, satisfying all Impropiators, and providing  
a more equal way of maintenance for the publick Ministers.
17. That you would have raised a stock of Money out of those many confiscated Estates you have had, for pay-  
ment of those who contributed voluntarily above their abilities, before you had provided for those that dis-  
burshed out of their superfluities.
18. That you would have bound your selves and all future Parliaments from abolishing propriety, levelling  
mens Estates, or making all things common.
19. That you would have declared what the duty or business of the Kingly office is, and what not; and ascer-  
tained the Revenue, past increase or diminution, that so there might never be more quarrels about the same.
20. That you would have rectified the election of publick Officers of the Citie of London, and of every parti-  
cular Company therein, restoring the Commonalty thereof to their just Rights, most unjustly withheld from  
them, to the producing and maintaining of corrupt, intrest, opposite to common Freedom, and exceedingly  
prejudicial to the Trade and Manufactures of this Nation.
21. That you would have made full and ample reparations to all persons that had bin oppressed by sentences  
in High Commission, Star-Chamber, and Councill Board, or by any kind of Monopolizers or Projectors;  
and that out of the Estates of those that were Authors, Actors, or Promoters of so intolerable mischiefs:  
and that without much attendance or seeking.
22. That you would have abolished all Committees, and have conveyed all businesses into the true method of  
the usuall Tryalls of the Common-wealth.
23. That you would not have followed the example of former tyrannous and superstitious Parliaments, in mak-  
ing Orders, Ordinances, or Laws, or in appointing punishments concerning opinions or things super-natu-  
ral, stirring some blasphemies, others heresies, when as you know your selves easily mistaken, and that divine  
Truths need no humane helps to support them: such proceedings having bin generally invented to deuide the  
people amongst themselves, and to affright men from that liberty of discourse by which Corruption and ty-  
ranny would be soon discovered.
24. That you would have declared what the business of the Lords is, and ascertain their condition, not de-  
rogating from the Liberties of other men; that so there might be an end of striving about the same.
25. That you would have done Justice upon the Capital Authors and Promoters of the former or late wars,  
many of them being under your power: Considering that mercy to the wicked, is cruelty to the innocent;  
and that all your lenity doth but make them the more insolent and presumptuous.
26. That you would have provided constant pay for the Army now under the command of the Lord General  
Fairfax, and given rules to all Judges, and all other publick Officers throughout the Land, for their indemp-  
nity and for the saving harmless all that have any waies assisted you, or that have said or done any thing a-  
gainst the King, Queen, or any of his party since the beginning of this Parliament, without which anie of his  
party are in a better condition then those that have served you; nothing being more frequent with them,  
then their reviling of you and your friends.
27. That you would have laid to heart all the abundance of innocent blood that hath bin spilt, and the infinite  
spoil and havock that hath bin made of peaceable harmless people, by expresse commissions from the King; and  
seriously to have considered whether the justice of God be likely to be satisfied, or his yet continuing wrath  
appeased, by an Act of Oblivion.

The things and worthy Acts which have bin done and atchieved by this Army and their Adherents (howe-  
ver ingratulately suffered to be scandalized as Sectaries, and men of corrupt judgements) in defence of the just  
authority of this honorable House, and of the common liberties of the Nation, and in opposition to all kind of  
tyranny and oppression, being so far from meriting an odious Act of Oblivion, that they rather deserve a most  
honorable Act of perpetual remembrance, to be as a pattern of publick vertue, fidelity, & resolution to all po-  
sterity.

That you would have laid to heart all the abundance of innocent blood that hath bin spilt, and the infinite  
spoil and havock that hath bin made of peaceable harmless people, by expresse commissions from the King; and  
seriously to have considered whether the justice of God be likely to be satisfied, or his yet continuing wrath  
appeased, by an Act of Oblivion.

These and the like we have long time hoped you would have minded, and have made such an establishment  
for the generall peace and contentfull satisfaction of all sorts of people, as should have bin to the happiness of  
all future generations, and which we most earnestly desire you would set your selves speedily to effect; where-  
by the almost dying honour of this most honorable House, would be again revived, and the hearts of your Po-  
titioners and all other well-affected people, be afresh renewed unto you, the Freedom of the Nation (now in  
perpetuall hazard) would be firmly established, for which you would once more be so strengthened with the  
love of the people, that you should not need to cast your eyes any other waies (under God) for your security;  
but if all this availeth nothing, God be our Guide, for man sheweth us not a way for our preservation,

Upon the eleventh of September, 1648. this Petition was delivered into the House.  
And for their great pains & care to the publick good of the Kingdom, & would speedily take their humble desires into consid-  
ration.